BACHELOR THESIS

COMPARING ISSUE SALIENCE IN EU PROFILER STATEMENTS TO ISSUE SALIENCE IN ELECTION MANIFESTOS AND EUROPEAN CITIZENRY

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1. Introduction

Due to their widespread use, internet-based Voting Advice Applications (VAAs) such as the Dutch 'StemWijzer' and the German 'Wahl-O-Mat' have become one of the most striking subjects in electoral politics (Rosema, Anderson, & Walgrave, 2014, p. 240; Walgrave, Nuytemans, & Pepermans, 2009, pp. 1163–1166). Such online tools help voters find the political party that best matches their political preferences by matching the answers of voters to policy-related statements with the positions of parties on the same statements.

On occasion of the 2009 European Parliament (EP) elections, a consortium of European research institutions[1] launched the pan-European VAA 'EU Profiler' in the 27[2] European Member States plus Turkey, Switzerland and Croatia. Until shortly after the elections, more than 2.5 million initiated and almost one million completed sessions had been registered (Trechsel & Mair, 2011, p. 5). In other words, the EU Profiler had provided almost one million European citizens with voting advice.

The present thesis aims to assess the representativeness of that advice by analysing the EU Profiler statements' issue concentration and distribution and comparing it to issue salience of election manifestos[3] and issue salience of European citizens. The concept of issue salience is based on the assumption that political parties compete by emphasising issues and that electorates base their vote choice on personal issue prioritisation.

Previous research has found that statements are the core of every VAA, because statement selection has an impact on the advice that is given to the users (Lefevere & Walgrave, 2014; Van Camp, Lefevere, & Walgrave, 2014; Walgrave et al., 2009). Depending on the methods adopted for selecting VAA statements, the advice can vary significantly (Lefevere & Walgrave, 2014; Rosema et al., 2014; Walgrave et al., 2009). With regard to issue salience, it was found that it plays an important role for voter decisions, because it determines whether or not voters regard a given party as

[1] The EU Profiler project was initiated by the European Universtiy Institute, the Dutch voting advice website 'Kieskompas' and the NCCR Democracy/ Politools network.
[2] In 2009, Croatia was not a Member State.
[3] In this thesis, the term 'election manifestos' refers to the election programmes of national political parties, which were issued to the European Parliament elections (also known as Euromanifestos).

a potential vote choice (Bélanger & Meguid, 2008; van der Brug, 2004). Few studies have focused on issue salience in VAA statements (Lefevere & Walgrave, 2014; Van Camp et al., 2014) and to the best of the author's knowledge no empirical research has so far compared salience in VAA statements to salience in election manifestos and salience in European citizenry.

The thesis at hand therefore contributes to the existing research by focusing on the following research question: ***Is concentration and distribution of issues in EU Profiler statements closer to salience of political parties or to salience of European citizens?*** With this research question, the thesis recognises and attracts attention to the significant impact of political parties' and voters' issue prioritisations on VAAs' statement selection. Apart from the main research question, this thesis analyses whether EU Profiler statements address only relevant or a wide range of issues and whether issue concentration and distribution in EU Profiler statements advantages certain party families.

Concentration and distribution of issues in EU Profiler statements was examined by means of classical content analysis. As for the election manifestos, computer-assisted content analysis was conducted. Salience of European citizens was measured on the basis of the 2009 European Election Study's (EES) Voter Study.[4] The present thesis concentrates on six different territories in four European states, namely Austria, Germany, Ireland and the UK (i.e. England, Scotland and Wales).[5] The findings indicate that concentration and distribution of issues is closer to salience of European citizens than to salience of political parties. Besides that, it was found that EU Profiler builders seek to address a wide range of issues. Furthermore, salience in EU Profiler statements does not advantage a certain party family[6].

The thesis starts with an explanation of the theoretical framework, namely salience theory, and links it to VAA statement selection. Next, the research methodology is presented. Then the data is analysed and the findings are interpreted. After conclud-

[4] See section 3.1. for more details on the 2009 Voter Study.

[5] Northern Ireland was not included in the analysis, because it is not covered by the 2009 EES' Voter Study.

[6] The term 'party family' is a metaphor that refers to the classification of political parties on the basis of cross-party similarities. According to Mair and Mudde (1998, p. 226), the most suitable criteria for party classification are a party's origin and its ideological profile.

ing on the main findings and stating its implications, the thesis finishes with a discussion of its limitations.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Salience Theory

The present thesis can be located in the framework of salience theory, because it deals with the extent to which issue concentration and distribution in EU Profiler statements reflects salience in election manifestos and European citizenry.

Salience theory was developed in response to Anthony Downs' so-called 'proximity theory' (Downs, 1957). Downs argued that parties compete by taking different positions along a set of given issue dimensions. As a result he assumed that voters support the party that comes closest to their own preferences. Robertson (1976) revised Downs' theory by stating that parties do not compete by positioning themselves on a set of issues, but rather by emphasising their own preferred areas of concern, in which they perceive to have a relative advantage with regard to expertise, experience, popularity and reputation. According to this approach, not party position matters, but the extent to which parties emphasise and thus 'make salient' selected issues in their campaign (cf. Libbrecht et al. 2009, p. 60).

Pogorelis et al. (2005) found that the ideological and social base of a party and the distribution of government and regional competences determine what issues parties emphasise. For example, green parties are likely to stress the issue of environment, because this is what their ideology bases on. If an issue falls under government competence, it is less likely to be emphasised in regional elections (Pogorelis et al., 2005, p. 1007). The same applies vice versa.

Salience theory is closely related to the issue ownership model of vote choice. This model is based on the assumption that parties attract voters by emphasising issues on which they "own" a reputation of competence (Bélanger & Meguid, 2008, p. 477). For example, since the Social Democratic Party (SPD) in Germany might be considered as the party best able to deal with workers' rights, voters will most likely prefer the SPD over the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), with regard to that issue. However, according to Bélanger and Meguid (2008, p. 489) reputation alone is insuffi-

cient. In fact, they found that “a party’s issue competence will affect a voter’s behaviour *only* if the issue in question is considered salient” (ibidem, 489). In other words, the fact that the SPD ‘owns’ the issue of workers’ rights will not affect a voter’s decision, unless the voter regards this issue as salient (see also van der Brug 2004, p. 212). Hence, whether issue ownership has an effect on voter’s decision depends on the voter’s issue salience. This shows that issue salience does not only concern political parties, but also voters, because they prioritise issues just as political parties do.

Salience can be assessed on different levels. “A whole policy field might be deemed particularly important or one could look at an individual legislative proposal or even issues within that proposal” (Warntjen, 2011, p. 169). When measuring salience, it is important to distinguish between the actor-specific and the issue-specific component of salience. While the former refers to the extent to which different political actors agree or disagree on the relative salience of policies, the latter refers to the importance of policies as such (Warntjen, 2011, p. 169). The present thesis focuses on the actor-specific component of salience, because it examines whether EU Profiler builders, political parties and European citizens agree on the relative salience of policies.

Segal and Epstein (2000) distinguish two kinds of issue salience: retrospective and contemporaneous. The former refers to the case, when analysts view a certain issue as salient in present, regardless of whether the actors thought it was salient at the time they were dealing with it. The latter indicates that the actors thought the issue was salient at the time they were resolving it, regardless of whether analysts view it as salient in present. For the thesis at hand, it is primarily relevant how political parties perceived a certain issue contemporaneously, that is, while formulating the election manifestos.

As it can be noticed, explaining salience theory requires the use of the term ‘issue’. Wlezien (2005) specifies the term by distinguishing between an ‘issue’ and a ‘problem’ stating that an issue relates to public policy (e.g. environment), whereas a problem relates to conditions (e.g. global warming). This thesis focuses on issues in the sense of public policies. According to Franklin and Wlezien (1997) “salient issues are politically important. People care about these issues and hold opinions about them.

Moreover, these opinions are likely to structure party support and voting behaviour and form the subject of political debate (…)" (Franklin & Wlezien, 1997, p. 351).

With the above-mentioned in mind, it can be concluded that issue salience is an important part of electoral research. The following section shows, in how far issue salience is related to VAAs.

2.2. Statement Selection

Walgrave, Nuytemans, and Pepermans (2009, p. 1168) as well as Van Camp, Lefevere, and Walgrave (2012, pp. 2–7) identified several criteria, VAA builders base their statement selection on: Firstly, statements are supposed to deal with important political and social issues (salience criterion). Van Camp, Lefevere, and Walgrave (2012, p. 6) specify this criterion by stating that VAA builders focus on issues that are connected to a country's important political cleavage and on issues that will be relevant in the upcoming campaign and in the next legislative period. Secondly, statements should address a large number of different issues (distribution criterion). Thirdly, statements must discriminate between parties, which means that they must include those issues on which parties take opposing positions (discrimination criterion). Thus, parties can be distinguished more easily from one another. Fourthly, in some cases, parties are asked whether or not they agree on formulation and selection of statements (agreement criterion).

Van Camp, Lefevere, and Walgrave (2012) found that VAA builders tend to include a wide range of topics in their statements rather than concentrating the statements only on salient issues. Hence, VAA builders tend to base their statement selection on the distribution criterion rather than on the salience criterion. The researchers further argue that, due to the high distribution across issues, salient issues, such as economy, are underrepresented and relatively less important issues get disproportionately much attention by VAA builders. In contrast, Wagner and Ruusuvirta (2011, p. 400) found that party positions extracted from VAAs reflect left-right and economic positions to a great extent, whereas immigration and environment measures are reflected less. These findings suggest that the salience criterion is at odds with the distribution criterion. In other words, it is not possible to include mainly salient issues and at the same time address a wide range of different issues in VAA statements. In this regard,

the present thesis aims to find out whether EU Profiler follows the salience or the distribution criterion and whether distribution and concentration of issues across EU Profiler statements is closer to what political parties or to what European citizens regard as salient.

What the two above-mentioned studies agree upon is that VAAs do not allow parties and candidates to emphasise only those issues on which they take popular positions ignoring those for which they receive less public approval (Wagner and Ruusuvirta 2011, p. 409; Van Camp, Lefevere, and Walgrave 2012, p. 16). In other words, VAA builders seek to select statements on issues that are not highly emphasised or 'owned' by a political party. In view of this finding, the researchers conclude that VAAs do not follow the salience and ownership models, but rather the proximity model[7] of vote choice (Wagner and Ruusuvirta 2011, p. 409; Van Camp, Lefevere, and Walgrave 2012, p. 1). In contrast, Lefevere and Walgrave (2014, p. 254) state that many VAAs incorporate aspects of the issue salience model. For example, in some VAAs (inter alia EU Profiler) users can indicate, which issues they prioritise and thus weight the statements according to their personal salience. Moreover, some VAAs weight statements on the basis of election manifesto analysis. If a voter agrees with a party on an issue that receives much attention by that party, the voter's answer will be given more weight than the voter's answers on other (secondary) issues (Lefevere & Walgrave, 2014, p. 254).

In view of the fact that VAAs do not allow parties and candidates to emphasise only those issues on which they take popular positions, it has to be asked, on which sources VAA builders base their statement formulation and selection. Do they examine election manifestos before formulating the statements or do they formulate statements on the basis of current public debates (cf. Van Camp, Lefevere, and Walgrave 2012, p. 6)? The former would suggest that distribution and concentration of issues across VAA statements is closer to salience of election manifestos, whereas the latter would suggest that it is closer to salience of European citizens.

[7] The proximity model is based on the assumption that voters support the party that is closest to their own political preferences (Wagner and Ruusuvirta 2011, p. 409; Van Camp, Lefevere, and Walgrave 2012, p. 1).

As for EU Profiler, statements were selected as follows: "Party manifestos[8] were analysed to understand not only how frequently certain policy areas were mentioned, but also the 'urgency' with which parties discussed individual issues. At the same time, opinion polls (above all the Eurobarometer), earlier party manifesto coding, groups of experts, academics and journalists were consulted for what they considered to be the key issues in the election" (EU Profiler Consortium, n.d.). Hence, statement selection was partly based on salience in election manifestos and partly on salience in opinion polls and on expert opinions.

According to the EU Profiler consortium, their method of statement selection is "more immune from manipulation [by political parties] and more likely to guarantee neutrality" than the method of earlier VAAs, because it does not allow for political parties to decide themselves, which issues to cover (EU Profiler Consortium, n.d.). However, this claim has to be considered under reserve, because according to Trechsel and Mair (2009, p. 11), the above-mentioned statement selection method was complemented by letting political parties position themselves on each statement. Such self-positioning might result in the strategic manipulation by political parties, because they could consistently choose the average answer in order to attract voters on both sides of the ideological scale. Hence, whether or not the EU Profiler's method of statement selection is more immune from manipulation than the methods of earlier VAAs is questionable. However, in defence of EU Profiler's method of statement selection, it has to be mentioned that manipulation was controlled for by comparing the self-positioning of the parties with the results of the election manifesto coding (Trechsel & Mair, 2011, p. 14). In case of discrepancies between parties' self-positioning and manifesto coding, parties were asked to explain these discrepancies.

With regard to partisan statement selection, Walgrave, Nuytemans, and Pepermans (2009, pp. 1176–1177) found that over- or underrepresentation of issues in VAA statements may structurally advantage some parties at the expense of others, because some parties 'own' certain issues (Walgrave et al., 2009, p. 1168). This leads to the assumption that issue salience in VAA statements has an inbuilt tendency to favour a certain party (or party family), which 'owns' a given issue. Lefevere and Walgrave (2014) proved this assumption wrong. They found that issue-owning par-

[8] The term 'party manifestos' refers to election manifestos (see Trechsel and Mair 2009, p. 13)

ties whose 'owned' issues are salient in statements do not score higher among voters, who regard these issues as salient than among voters, who do not (Lefevere & Walgrave, 2014, p. 260). In fact, the opposite is the case: Parties with unpopular policy positions on core issues are disadvantaged when the issues they 'own' are salient in a VAA. This applies to small parties in particular. To give an example: A green party emphasising environmental issues would most likely agree to a statement asking whether the tax on car gas should be increased, although it is most likely the more unpopular position. If party salience was incorporated in the VAA calculations, the disadvantageous effect for the party would increase, because the statement would get more weight (cf. Lefevere and Walgrave 2014, p. 260). In this regard, the present thesis aims to examine whether salience of EU Profiler statements advantages certain party families.

In conclusion, it can be stated that there is one key finding, on which all the above-mentioned studies agree: Statement selection is the core element of VAAs, because it has a considerable impact on the output (i.e. advice) of VAAs (cf. Lefevere and Walgrave 2014, p. 261; Walgrave, Nuytemans, and Pepermans 2009, p. 1176; Van Camp, Lefevere, and Walgrave 2012, p. 17; Wagner and Ruusuvirta 2011, p. 403). Moreover, the salience criterion of VAA builders, the fact that VAAs incorporate aspects of the salience model, and the fact that EU Profiler builders partly base their statement selection on how frequently issues are mentioned in election manifestos show that issue salience has a considerable impact on VAA statement selection.

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Case Selection

The thesis at hand focuses on issue salience of 38 (28 general[9] and 10 country-specific[10]) EU Profiler statements, 27 election manifestos and the 2009 Voter Study of the European Election Studies (EES) project.[11] The comparison is conducted across six different European territories, namely Austria, Germany, Ireland, England,

[9] General statements address issues that concern the 27 Member States of the EU plus Turkey, Switzerland and Croatia.

[10] Country-specific statements address issues that are specific to a certain territory or region. As for UK, country-specific statements include one specific statement concerning the UK as a whole, and one specific statement per territory, i.e. England, Scotland and Wales.

[11] The European Election Studies (EES) examine electoral participation and voting behaviour in European Parliament elections by means of postelection surveys, content analysis of party manifestos and analysis of media news (Schmitt & Popa, n.d.-b).

Scotland and Wales. Both, the election manifestos and the EU Profiler statements were issued to the 2009 European Parliament (EP) elections. The 2009 EES' Voter Study is a sample survey of the electorates of the 27 European Member States and part of the 'PIREDEU'[12] project. It was conducted immediately after the 2009 EP elections.

The number of election manifestos that were analysed is lower than the number of political parties that were included in the 2009 EU Profiler (see Appendix 1). The reason for this is that the present thesis analyses election manifestos of 'relevant' parties only. According to the 'Euromanifestos-Project'[13], "relevant parties in the EU are those that have been represented in the European Parliament at least once" (Braun, Mikhaylov, & Schmitt, 2010). In contrast, EU Profiler does not use this criterion of relevance and therefore it includes more parties (see Appendix 1).

3.2. Research Design

The thesis at hand is descriptive for the following reason: It provides a systematic evaluation in terms of measurement; more specifically, it compares issue salience in EU Profiler statements with issue salience across parties and citizens. It does not aim to determine a causal relationship between two or more variables.

There are three different units of analysis in this thesis: EU Profiler statements, election manifestos and the Voter Study. Moreover, there are three different units of measurement: Sentences, words and answer frequencies. For each unit of analysis, the most suitable unit of measurement was used; that is, sentences for EU Profiler, words for election manifestos and answer frequencies for the Voter Study.

By examining word frequencies in election manifestos and answer frequencies in the Voter Study, two important dimensions of electoral competition are taken into consideration: Salience of political parties and salience of European citizens. These two

[12] PIREDEU: 'Providing an Infrastructure for Research on Electoral Democracy in the European Union' is a pan-European project, which aims to provide a better infrastructure for research on citizenship, political participation, and electoral democracy in the European Union. In the context of the 2009 elections to the European Parliament, the scientific and technical feasibility of this infrastructure was tested for the first time (Schmitt & Popa, n.d.-b).

[13] The Euromanifestos-Project collects, codes and analyses Euromanifestos issued to the elections to the European Parliament. Its aim is to measure issue emphasis and policy positions of political parties across European countries (Schmitt & Popa, n.d.-a).

dimensions are compared to distribution and concentration of issues in EU Profiler statements. Thus, it can be examined whether EU Profiler statements' distribution and concentration is closer to salience of political parties or salience of European citizens.

3.2.1. Measuring issue salience in EU Profiler

The EU Profiler is relevant, because it is the first scientifically devised pan-European VAA (Walgrave et al., 2009, p. 1165). It accounted for almost one million users in the European election period of 2009 (Trechsel & Mair, 2011, p. 5).

In order to measure issue salience in EU Profiler statements, the 18 issue categories of Van Camp et al. (2012) were adopted. The categories cover social, political, environmental and economic issues (see Table 1 below, pp. 10 - 11). The title of the category 'Society, Ethical themes and Religion' was complemented by the term 'Ethnicity'. The category 'Others' was complemented by three sub-categories, namely 'Industry', 'Drugs' and 'IT, Communication and Media'. These adjustments were made in order to specify the categories' contents. Moreover, the title of the category 'State Reform' was changed to '(State) Reform', because in the present thesis it refers to other kinds of reform as well.

Table 1: Issue categories adopted from Van Camp et al. (2012)

Issue Category	Title
1	Government finances, Taxes and Budget
2	Society, Ethnicity, Ethical themes and Religion
3	Foreign policy, Defence and Development aid
4	Social Security
5	Public order & safety, Justice and Police
6	Internal affairs
7	Work
8	Education and Research
9	Welfare, Family and Health
10	Mobility, Traffic and Transport
11	Immigration and Integration
12	Environment and Energy
13	Economy
14	Europe
15	Culture and Recreation
16	(State) Reform
17	Housing

18	Others
18.1.	Industry
18.2.	Drugs
18.3.	IT, Communication and Media

The EU Profiler statements were analysed by means of *classical* quantitative content analysis (cf. Krippendorff, 2004). The unit of measurement is sentences, because each statement consists of one sentence. Depending on what issues they address, 28 general and 10 country-specific EU Profiler statements were manually assigned to the 18 issue categories (see Appendix 2). Note that each statement was assigned to one issue category only. The number of sentences that fit into a given issue category is the indicator for the degree of salience of that issue category. Hence, the more statements cover the issue category, the more salient is that issue category. In order to make data comparable, the shares of each issue category were calculated by dividing the statement frequencies per category by the total number of statements.

3.2.2. Measuring issue salience across parties

For the following reasons, election manifestos are the most suitable source for measuring issue salience across political parties: Firstly, election manifestos give the clearest overview of what the political parties stand for shortly before an election (cf. Rooduijn and Pauwels 2011, p. 1274). As opposed to speeches, they are formulated by the whole party and not by one particular faction, because they are intended to present the full picture of parties' positions on current political, social, economic and environmental issues. Secondly, election manifestos are applicable for cross-national analysis, because they are reasonably comparable across countries (Rooduijn & Pauwels, 2011, p. 1274). Thirdly, election manifestos are the most frequently examined documents by the advocates of salience theory (see Comparative Manifestos Project, CMP[14]) (cf. Budge et al. 2001; Libbrecht et al. 2009, p. 60). Fourthly, they serve as primary data sources (Libbrecht et al., 2009, p. 60).

In contrast to the EU Profiler statements, the election manifestos were analysed by means of *computer-assisted* quantitative content analysis (see Laver and Garry 2000). As for the election manifestos, the unit of measurement is word frequencies. The open-source desktop tool 'Yoshikoder' is capable of calculating word frequencies

[14] The Comparative Manifestos Project (CMP) is a quantitative content analysis of election-related documents from over 50 countries covering all free, democratic elections since 1945.

as well as building and applying content dictionaries in multiple languages (Lowe, 2004, p. 1).

The content dictionary used for the present thesis is divided into the 18 issue categories adopted from Van Camp et al. (2012) (see section 3.2.1.). Each issue category contains patterns; these are "wildcarded strings that match one or more words in a text" (Lowe, 2004, p. 3). An asterisk at the beginning or at the end of a pattern represents one or more unspecified letters. To give an example: The pattern 'econ*' matches 'economy', 'economic' and 'economics'. The pattern '*employ*' matches 'unemployment' as well as 'employer', 'employee', 'employment', etc. Most of the dictionary patterns are adopted from Laver and Garry's dictionary of policy positions (Laver & Garry, 2000). They were complemented by other relevant patterns, which are not included in Laver and Garry's dictionary. If possible, asterisks were added to the patterns (see also section 6.2.).

The completed English dictionary was translated into German (see Appendix 3), because the thesis examines EU Profiler statements and election manifestos in English and German. For linguistic and grammatical reasons, the German dictionary includes more patterns than the English version. For example, the English pattern 'regulat*' can be translated into 'regulier*, regulation, regel*, vorschrift* and verordn*'; these are all common terms in German and therefore likely to occur in the election manifestos.

By means of Yoshikoder, the German dictionary was applied to six Austrian and seven German election manifestos; the English dictionary was applied to six Irish and eight UK (i.e. English, Scottish and Welsh) election manifestos (see Appendix 1). Yoshikoder measures word frequencies by counting the number of times a given dictionary pattern matches with a related word of a given text (Lowe, 2004, p. 1). The results serve as an indicator of issue salience, because the more often a word occurs within a text, the more salient is the word and thus the issue category that the word relates to. The shares of each issue category were calculated by dividing the word scores per category by the total number of scored words in a given election manifesto.

3.2.3. Measuring issue salience across citizens

The 2009 Voter Study is a suitable source for measuring salience of European citizens, because it is a scientific pan-European study. Moreover, due to its large sample size (1,000 interviews per country), it provides a representative estimate of what European citizens regard as salient (Schmitt & Popa, n.d.-b).

The Voter Study collected data by means of telephone interviews[15] among samples of enfranchised European citizens in all 27 Member States[16] of the EU (Schmitt & Popa, n.d.-b). Approximately 1,000 interviews were realized per country. The first three questions of the survey ask the participant, what he or she regards to be the most, second most and third most important problem (MIP) in his or her country of origin. The researchers categorised the answers by issues.

In order to fit the Voter Study to the present thesis, the following adjustments were made for each of the six examined territories: Firstly, the Voter Study's categories were assigned to the 18 issue categories used for the present thesis. Secondly, the answer frequencies of each issue category were summed up across the three MIP questions. To give an example: While 293 Austrian participants regard 'Economy' as the most important problem in Austria, 173 regard it as the second most important problem and 93 regard it as the third most important problem. Summing these frequencies up results in 559; this indicates that 559 Austrian participants regard 'Economy' as salient (see section 6.2. for a discussion about the measurement validity of using the MIP questions to measure issue salience).

The Voter Study's unit of measurement is answer frequencies, that is, the number of answers fitting into a given issue category. The more answers there are in a given category, the higher the salience degree of that issue category. The shares of each issue category were calculated by dividing the answer frequencies per category by the total number of answers.

[15] In countries where phone sampling was not feasible (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Slovakia), interviews were partly conducted on face-to-face mode (Schmitt & Popa, n.d.-b).

[16] In 2009, Croatia was not yet a member of the EU. Therefore, the 2009 Voter Study focuses on 27 Member States instead of 28.

4. Analysis

In order to compare issue salience in EU Profiler statements to issue salience across parties and European citizens, two different indicators were used, namely issue concentration and distribution. The former indicates the extent to which EU Profiler statements, election manifestos and the Voter Study focus on issues. The latter shows, how EU Profiler statements, election manifestos and the Voter Study are dispersed across issues.

The difference between issue concentration and distribution can be explained by means of a simplified example: Figure 1 (see below) shows two different diagrams; one showing issue concentration and distribution in a given election manifesto and the other one showing issue concentration and distribution in a given set of VAA statements. The graphs show that issue distribution across the election manifesto is different from issue distribution across VAA statements, because the categories differ with regard to word counts. In contrast, issue concentration is the same, because the total number of word counts (13) across the categories is the same. In other words, the election manifesto and the VAA statements concentrate on issues to the same extent, but they are dispersed differently across issues.

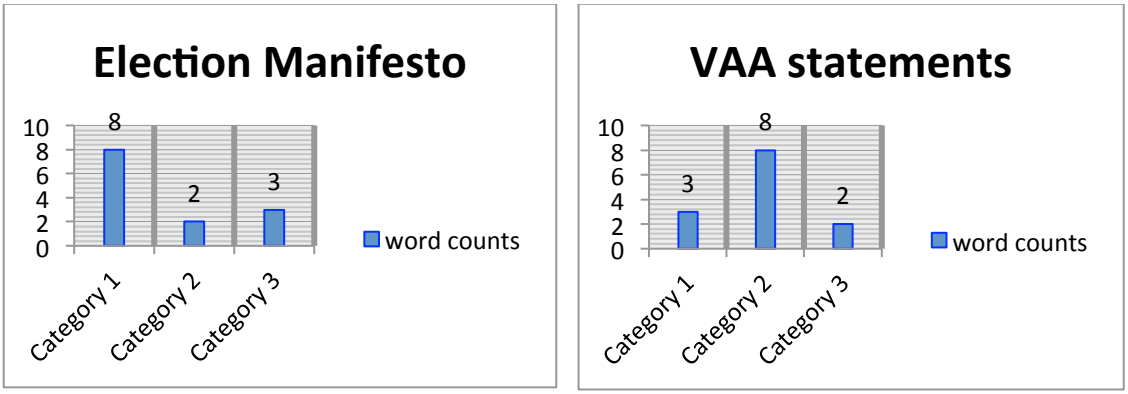

Figure 1: Example showing the difference between issue concentration and distribution

4.1. Herfindahl Hirschmann index and Chi-squared goodness of fit test

Issue concentration in EU Profiler statements, election manifestos and the Voter Study was measured by calculating the Herfindahl Hirschmann index (HHI). This is done by firstly squaring the share of each issue category (s_i^2) and secondly summing the squared shares up: $H = \sum_{i=1}^{N} s_i^2$. The index ranges from 0 indicating minimum concentration to 1 indicating maximum concentration. High issue concentration indi-

cates a high degree of salience, whereas low issue concentration indicates a low degree of salience.

Issue distribution was measured by conducting a 'Chi-squared goodness of fit test'. This test is used to answer two questions: Firstly, whether issue distribution in EU Profiler statements is similar or different from issue distribution in election manifestos and the Voter Study. Secondly, provided that there is a difference, whether this difference between EU Profiler statements and election manifestos or the Voter Study is not due to chance alone (i.e. statistically significant).

The test is based on the following null hypothesis: The distribution across issue categories in EU Profiler statements is similar to the distribution in election manifestos and the Voter Study. This hypothesis is to be rejected if the p-value of the 'Chi-squared goodness of fit test' is less than the 0.05 significance level[17]. If the p-value is greater than the 0.05 significance level, the null hypothesis is verified.

4.2. Issue Concentration

Table 3 (see Appendix 4) lists the HHI values for EU Profiler statements, the Voter Study and the election manifestos per territory. Moreover, it indicates what party families the political parties belong to (see Appendix 11 for index of political party names).

Before starting with the territory-specific analysis, it has to be mentioned that the following findings apply to each of the examined territories: Firstly, the HHI for EU Profiler is lower than those of the Voter Study and the election manifestos. This indicates that the degree of issue concentration in EU Profiler statements is generally lower than the degree of issue concentration in the Voter Study and the election manifestos.

Secondly, with the exception of the Austrian HPM (0.41) and the German REP (0.35), HHIs (for EU Profiler, election manifestos and the Voter Study) are generally low ranging from minimum 0.12 to maximum 0.29. This indicates that the degree of

[17] The 0.05 significance level indicates that there is a 95% probability that the difference between EU Profiler statements and election manifestos or the Voter Study is not due to chance alone (i.e. statistically significant).

issue concentration is generally low, regardless of whether EU Profiler statements, election manifestos or the Voter Study is concerned.

It can be assumed that the relatively high HHIs of HPM and REP are due to the low number of words scored by the dictionary (18 for HPM and 69 for REP), because issue concentration might be conditioned by the number of scored dictionary words: The less words there are, the less issues can be covered, which in turn means the greater the degree of issue concentration. However, UKIP's election manifesto accounts for a lower HHI (0.19) than REP's election manifesto (0.35), although the dictionary scored less words in UKIP's than in REP's election manifesto (see Appendix 2). Moreover, CDU's and CSU's election manifestos account for relatively high HHIs, although they feature a high number of words scored by the dictionary. Hence, it can be assumed that HHIs are not only conditioned by word scores, but also by the fact that issue concentration is conditioned by the parties' different ideological and social bases (see section 2.1.).

4.2.1. Austria

The findings for Austria with regard to HHI are as follows: Compared to the election manifestos, the HHI for the Voter Study (0.14) is closest to EU Profiler's HHI. Except for HPM, the HHIs for the Austrian parties range from 0.16 (SPÖ) to 0.25 (FPÖ), which indicates that issue concentration in Austrian election manifestos is rather low.

The findings can be interpreted as follows: Firstly, in terms of issue concentration the Voter Study is more similar to EU Profiler statements than any of the Austrian election manifestos. Secondly, the great difference between the HHIs of the two social democratic parties SPÖ and HPM suggests that the degree of issue concentration is not related to political orientation. However, this assumption is to be regarded under reserve, because due to the low number of scored words, the statistical significance of the HHI for HPM is questionable. The same goes for the other election manifestos with low numbers of scored dictionary words (i.e. REP and UKIP).

In summary, it can be stated that – in terms of issue concentration – Austria's Voter Study is more similar to Austrian EU Profiler statements than to Austrian election

manifestos. This means that concentration of Austrian EU Profiler statements is closer to salience of Austrian citizens than to salience of Austrian political parties.

4.2.2. Germany

There are two out of seven German election manifestos (i.e. B90GRÜNEN and LINKE) that are closer to EU Profiler than the Voter Study. The HHI values of the other political parties range from 0.21 (SPD) to 0.35 (REP). Christian democratic and extreme right parties account for the highest HHI values.

The findings indicate that EU Profiler statements' issue concentration is closer to salience of the German B90GRÜNEN and LINKE than to salience of German citizens. Moreover, it can be noticed that - compared to other party families - issue concentration in German Christian democratic and extreme right parties is most different from EU Profiler's issue concentration.

4.2.3. Ireland

The HHI of the FG election manifesto (0.15) is closest to EU Profiler's HHI (0.13). It is followed by the LAB election manifesto and the Voter Study, which both account for a HHI of 0.17.

Given the findings, it can be inferred that issue concentration in EU Profiler statements is closer to salience of the Irish FG party than to salience of Irish citizens. However, the difference is minimal accounting for 0.2.

4.2.4. England

The HHI of the green party's election manifesto (0.14) is closest to EU Profiler's HHI (0.12). The Voter Study is almost as close to EU Profiler as GREENS accounting for 0.14. Apart from that, it can be noticed that English election manifestos' HHIs vary slightly ranging from 0.13 to 0.19.

The findings for England indicate that issue concentration in EU Profiler statements is slightly closer to salience of the English green party than to salience of English citizens. Moreover, it can be inferred that English election manifestos differ only slightly with regard to issue concentration.

4.2.5. Scotland

As for Scotland it was found that HHI for the Voter Study (0.14) is closest to EU Profiler's HHI. However, BNP is almost as close as the Voter Study accounting for 0.15. Just as in England, Scottish election manifestos' HHIs vary slightly ranging from 0.14 to 0.19. This is due to the fact that, except for 'GREENS', the examined English parties are also represented in Scotland.

The findings for Scotland indicate that issue concentration in EU Profiler statements is slightly closer to salience of Scottish citizens than to salience of BNP. Moreover, it can be inferred that differences in issue concentration among Scottish election manifestos are small.

4.2.6. Wales

As for Wales, the HHI for the green party (0.13) is closest to EU Profiler's HHI. The Voter Study, PC and BNP share the same HHI (0.15). Just as in England and Scotland, Welsh election manifestos' HHIs vary slightly ranging from 0.13 to 0.19. This is due to the fact that the examined English parties are also represented in Wales.

The findings for Wales indicate that issue concentration in EU Profiler statements is slightly closer to salience of the green party than to salience of Welsh citizens. Moreover, it can be inferred that differences in issue concentration among Scottish election manifestos are small.

4.2.7. Party Families

The question is, whether issue concentration in EU Profiler is close to a certain party family. This can be examined by calculating the average HHIs[18] for each party family and comparing them to the EU Profiler's average HHI[19]. Political parties were classified into party families on the basis of their origin and ideological profile (Mair & Mudde, 1998, p. 226).

[18] The average HHI of the party families was calculated by summing up the respective HHIs per party family and dividing them by the total number of political parties belonging to that party family.

[19] The EU Profiler's average HHI was calculated by summing up the EU Profiler's HHIs per territory and dividing them by the total number of examined territories. The election manifestos' average HHI and the Voter Study's average HHI were calculated in the same way.

Table 5 (see Appendix 6) lists the average HHI for EU Profiler and for each party family. It shows that the average HHIs of green and regionalist parties (0.16 each) are closest to the average HHI of EU Profiler (0.12). Radical left/ communist, liberal, conservative and eurosceptic parties are second closest to the average HHI of EU Profiler. Each of these party families accounts for an average HHI of 0.19. Hence, there are four 'second closest' party families, which differ only slightly from the closest party families, in terms of HHI.

The findings with regard to party families indicate the following: On the one hand, issue concentration is closest to green and regionalist parties. On the other hand, the difference between closest and second closest HHIs is too slight to infer that EU Profiler's issue concentration is clearly in favour of green and regionalist party families' salience. Therefore it can be concluded that issue concentration of EU Profiler statements is not close to salience of a certain party family.

4.2.8. Interim Conclusion

Taking the findings for all territories into consideration, the following conclusions can be made with regard to issue concentration: The fact that the degree of issue concentration in EU Profiler statements is generally lower than the degree of issue concentration in the Voter Study and the election manifestos indicates that issue salience in EU Profiler statements is lower than issue salience across European citizenry and political parties. This suggests that EU Profiler builders select statements on the basis of the distribution criterion rather than the salience criterion. Moreover, the fact that the degree of issue concentration is generally low (except for issue concentration in HPM and REP election manifestos) indicates that issue salience is neither remarkably high in EU Profiler statements nor in election manifestos or the Voter Study.

As for two territories (Austria and Scotland), in comparison to the election manifestos, the Voter Study is closest to EU Profiler in terms of HHI value. With regard to the other four territories, election manifestos are closer to EU Profiler than the Voter Study. However, in three of these cases the Voter Study is the second closest to EU Profiler. Hence, it can be stated that the Voter Study is generally closer to EU Profiler than most of the election manifestos. This finding is congruent with the fact that - in

comparison to the election manifestos' average HHIs per territory – the Voter Study's average HHI (0.15) is closer to EU Profiler's average HHI (see Appendix 7).

In view of the above-mentioned, it can be concluded that issue concentration in EU Profiler statements is closer to salience of European citizens than to salience of European political parties. Moreover, issue concentration is not close to salience of a certain party family. This is congruent with the EU Profiler consortium's claim of neutrality, which states that EU Profiler's method of statement selection is "more immune from manipulation [by political parties] and more likely to guarantee neutrality" (EU Profiler Consortium, n.d.).

4.3. Issue Distribution

Table 4 (see Appendix 5) lists the p-values for the Voter Study and election manifestos per territory in comparison to EU Profiler statements per territory. With the exception of the p-values for the Austrian HPM and the British UKIP, the p-values for the examined political parties and the Voter Study are all above the 0.05 significance level. This indicates that the null hypothesis (see section 4.1.) is verified for the Voter Study and for the majority of election manifestos. In the following sections, territory specific peculiarities will be analysed.

4.3.1. Austria

With the exception of the p-value for the HPM election manifesto, the p-values of the Austrian election manifestos are all above the 0.05 significance level. The same goes for the Voter Study, which accounts for a p-value of 0.31. The LF election manifesto is the only one that accounts for a higher p-value (0.36) than the Voter Study. The other election manifestos' p-values range from 0.11 to 0.24.

The results for Austria indicate the following: As for the HPM election manifesto, the null hypothesis is to be rejected. The low p-value of the HPM election manifesto might be due to the low number of word scores and to the party's ideological and social base (see section 4.2.).

As for the other election manifestos and the Voter Study the null hypothesis is verified. More precisely, the results show that distribution in the LF election manifesto is

most similar to distribution across issue categories in EU Profiler statements. In comparison to the election manifestos, the Voter Study has the second most similar (to EU Profiler) distribution after LF.

In summary, it can be stated that - with the exception of the LF election manifesto's distribution - the Voter Study's distribution is more similar to EU Profiler's distribution than to Austrian election manifestos' distributions. This suggests that Austrian EU Profiler's distribution is closer to Austrian citizens' salience than to salience of the majority of Austrian political parties.

4.3.2. Germany

The p-values for the German Voter Study (0.40) and the German election manifestos are all above the 0.05 significance level. The latter range from 0.10 to 0.22. In comparison to the election manifestos, the Voter Study accounts for the highest p-value.

The findings for Germany indicate that the null hypothesis is verified for the election manifestos as well as for the Voter Study. In terms of distribution, the Voter Study is noticeably closer to German EU Profiler than the election manifestos. This means that German EU Profiler's distribution is closer to salience of German citizens than to salience of German political parties.

4.3.3. Ireland

The p-values for the Irish Voter Study (0.21) and the Irish election manifestos are all above the 0.05 significance level. The p-values for the election manifestos range from 0.06 to 0.58. As for FF (0.58) and LAB (0.48) they are noticeably high. The majority of election manifestos accounts for a higher p-value than the Irish Voter Study.

The findings for Ireland indicate the following: Firstly, the null hypothesis is verified for the election manifestos as well as for the Voter Study. With regard to distribution, the majority of election manifestos are closer to Irish EU Profiler than the Voter Study. As for FF and LAB the degrees of similarity are noticeably high. Hence, Irish EU Profiler's distribution is closer to salience of Irish political parties (particularly conservative and social democratic parties) than to salience of Irish citizens.

4.3.4. England

It can be noticed that the findings for England are similar to those for Austria: There is one election manifesto, namely the one of UKIP, that accounts for a p-value below the 0.05 significance level. The other election manifestos' p-values range from 0.07 to 0.38. The Voter Study's p-value is also above the significance level accounting for 0.31. The election manifesto of the green party (0.38) is the only one that accounts for a higher p-value than the Voter Study.

The findings indicate the following: As for the UKIP election manifesto, the null hypothesis is to be rejected. The low p-value of the UKIP election manifesto might be due to the low number of word scores and the party's ideological and social base (see section 4.2.).

As for the other election manifestos and the Voter Study, the null hypothesis is verified. More precisely, the p-values show that distribution in the green party's election manifesto is most similar to distribution in EU Profiler statements. In comparison to the election manifestos, the Voter Study has the second most similar distribution after the green party.

In summary, it can be stated that - with the exception of GREENS election manifesto's distribution – the Voter Study' distribution is more similar to EU Profiler's distribution than English election manifestos' distribution. This shows that English EU Profiler's distribution is closer to English citizens' salience than to salience of the majority of English political parties.

4.3.5. Scotland

Just as Austria and England, Scotland has one election manifesto that accounts for a higher p-value than the Scottish Voter Study (0.23); this is the election manifesto of LD, which accounts for 0.27. In contrast to Austria and England, there is one election manifesto in Scotland that accounts for the same p-value as the Voter Study; this is the election manifesto of the Scottish National Party (SNP). Except for UKIP's[20] election manifesto, the other election manifestos' p-values range from 0.07 to 0.27.

[20] The UKIP in Scotland is the same as in England and Wales. Therefore the findings as specified in the section for England apply to Scotland and Wales as well.

The findings indicate that the null hypothesis is verified for the Voter Study as well as for the majority of election manifestos (except for UKIP). Moreover, they show that, in terms of distribution, LD election manifesto is closer to EU Profiler than the Voter Study. The SNP election manifesto is just as close to EU Profiler as the Voter Study. However, the majority of election manifestos are not as close to EU Profiler as the Voter Study, which indicates that Scottish EU Profiler's distribution is closer to Scottish citizens' salience than to salience of Scottish political parties.

4.3.6. Wales

Similar to Germany, the p-values for the Welsh Voter Study (0.48) and the Welsh election manifestos (except for UKIP) are all above the 0.05 significance level. The election manifestos' p-values range from 0.02 to 0.38. In comparison to the election manifestos, the Voter Study accounts for the highest p-value (0.48).

The findings for Wales verify the null hypothesis for the Voter Study as well as for the majority of the election manifestos (except for UKIP). In terms of distribution, the Voter Study is noticeably closer to the Welsh EU Profiler than to the election manifestos. This means that Welsh EU Profiler's distribution is closer to salience of Welsh citizens than to salience of Welsh political parties.

4.3.7. Party Families

The question is, whether issue distribution in EU Profiler is close to a certain party family. This can be examined by comparing the average p-values[21] for each party family. Table 7 (see Appendix 8) lists the average p-value for each party family. The average p-values of green (0.28), liberal and conservative (both 0.27) parties are the highest. The average p-value for regionalist parties is also relatively high accounting for 0.25. This indicates that EU Profiler's distribution is closest to green parties, second closest to liberal and conservative parties and third closest to regionalist parties. However, the differences between the closest, second and third closest p-values are very small.

[21] The average p-values of each party family were calculated by summing up the respective p-values per party family and dividing them by the total number of parties belonging to that party family.

The findings with regard to party families indicate the following: On the one hand, just as it is the case for issue concentration, EU Profiler's issue distribution is closest to green parties. In contrast to the case of issue concentration, it is not closest to regionalist parties. On the other hand, the difference between closest, second and third closest p-values is too small to infer that EU Profiler's issue distribution is clearly in favour of green party family's salience. Therefore it can be concluded that issue distribution of EU Profiler statements is not close to salience of a certain party family. Just as the result for issue concentration, this is congruent with the EU Profiler Consortium's claim of neutral statement selection (see above).

4.3.8. Interim Conclusion

Taking the findings for all territories into consideration, the following conclusions can be made with regard to distribution: Firstly, the p-values are generally low across all examined territories, with the exceptions of Irish FF (0.58) and Irish LAB (0.48) election manifestos and the German (0.40) and Welsh (0.48) Voter Study (see Appendix 5). The low p-values indicate that the degree of similarity to EU Profiler's distribution is generally low for both, election manifestos as well as the Voter Study. In other words, with a few exceptions, EU Profiler's distribution is neither strikingly close to political parties' nor to European citizens' salience.

Secondly, as for five out of six examined territories - in comparison to the p-values of the election manifestos - the p-values of the Voter Study are either closest or second closest to EU Profiler's p-values. Hence, in terms of distribution, the Voter Study is generally closer to EU Profiler than the election manifestos. This finding is congruent with the fact that the Voter Study's average p-value (0.32)[22] is the highest compared to the election manifestos' average p-values per territory[23] (see Appendix 9).

In view of the above-mentioned it can be concluded that EU Profiler's distribution is neither close to salience of political parties nor to salience of European citizens. However, distribution of EU Profiler statements is closer to salience of European citizens than to salience of political parties.

[22] The Voter Study's average p-value was calculated by summing up the Voter Studies' p-values of all six examined territories and dividing them by the total number of examined territories.

[23] The election manifestos' average p-value per territory was calculated by summing up the election manifestos' p-values per territory and dividing them by the total number of examined election manifestos for the respective territory.

5. Conclusion

The present thesis' purpose is to examine whether concentration and distribution of issues in EU Profiler statements is closer to salience of election manifestos or to salience of European citizens. Moreover, it aims to find out whether statement selection in EU Profiler is based on the salience or the distribution criterion and whether concentration and distribution in EU Profiler statements advantages certain party families.

As for the main research goal, it can be concluded that concentration as well as distribution of issues in EU Profiler statements is closer to salience of European citizens than to salience of political parties. This was found by comparing the HHIs and p-values of EU Profiler statements, election manifestos and the Voter Study across six European territories.

With regard to the second research purpose, it can be concluded that EU Profiler builders based their statement selection on the distribution rather than on the salience criterion. This was found by measuring issue concentration in EU Profiler statements by means of the HHI. The results show that EU Profiler statements do not concentrate on a few issues, but rather on a wider range of issues.

With regard to the third research goal, it can be concluded that neither concentration nor distribution of issues in EU Profiler statements advantages a certain party family.

The finding that distribution and concentration in EU Profiler statements is closer to European citizens' salience than to salience of election manifestos firstly implicates that statement selection is based on public debate rather than election manifestos. This is at odds with the EU Profiler builders' assertion that their statement selection is based on election manifestos and party's self-positioning (Trechsel and Mair 2009, p. 13; EU Profiler Consortium n.d.). One reason for why EU Profiler statements are closer to European citizens' salience than to election manifestos might be that journalists and academics have a great impact on EU Profiler's statement selection (see section 2.2.). They are more likely to consider what issues are salient in the public debate than political parties (and their election manifestos), because political parties are more likely to attract attention to the issues they 'own'.

Secondly, it implicates that EU Profiler statements are relatively immune from manipulation by political parties, because salience in election manifestos does not have a great impact on EU Profiler statements, if the statements are mainly based on public debate rather than on election manifestos. However, basing the statements on public debate might have the consequence that EU Profiler users are informed about their stances within the public debate rather than about their party preferences. In this case, the EU Profiler would miss its original purpose, namely informing its users about their party preferences. This problem is partly compensated by the fact that EU Profiler builders consider political parties' self-positioning, when they formulate the statements.

The finding that EU Profiler statements do not advantage a certain party family also suggests that EU Profiler statements are immune from manipulation by political parties. Hence, it can be assumed that parties' self-positioning on the EU Profiler statements does not lead to strategic manipulation of the statements by political parties.

Basing statement selection on the distribution criterion has the following implication: On the one hand, EU Profiler builders encourage parties as well as European citizens to pay attention to minor issues by including a wide range of issues instead of including only salient issues (cf. Van Camp, Lefevere, and Walgrave 2012, pp. 15–16). On the other hand, the more minor issues they include, the less do EU Profiler builders meet their goal of addressing relevant issues.

In view of the above-mentioned implications, it can be concluded that EU Profiler is a rather user-orientated VAA, because its statements reflect salience of European citizens rather than salience of political parties. By providing the possibility for political parties to position themselves on each statement, the EU Profiler builders found a good balance between user-orientation (i.e. including salience in public debate) and including salience of political parties.

The thesis at hand does not only aim to produce research results, but to encourage further research on issue salience in VAA statements in comparison to election manifestos and European citizens. Subsequent studies should include more territories, more parties and more VAAs. They should further investigate the impact of election

manifestos' and public debate's issue salience on the VAA statement selection process. Moreover, further research should examine to what extent VAAs are based on the salience model of vote choice. In this regard, it would be interesting to find out about the effects of VAA statements' issue salience on vote choice.

6. Limitations

6.1. Inter-coder reliability

According to Neuendorf (2002, p. 12), inter-coder reliability is the extent to which different coders yield the same coding results for a given text by using the same coding scheme.

Krippendorff (2004) distinguishes between three forms of coding reliability. The weakest form is stability. It indicates whether the same text is coded by the same coder more than once (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 214-6). A stronger form of coding reliability is reproducibility. This is measured by the degree of agreement among independent coders (Gemenis, 2012b, p. 9). Accuracy is the strongest form of coding reliability. It refers to the extent to which coders agree on a given standard and among each other (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 216). The above-mentioned forms of coding reliability can only be measured, if there is a common coding scheme (Gemenis, 2012b, p. 9).

Within the present thesis, election manifestos were coded by means of computer-assisted coding. Inter-coder reliability is rather concerned with human instead of computer coding, because different computers will always yield the same coding results, unless the researcher changes the coding-algorithm. As for the present thesis, the computer coding results for the election manifestos will not change, unless the dictionary is altered. Hence, as far as election manifesto coding within the present thesis is concerned, there is no need for testing inter-coder reliability, because coding was done by means of a computer programme.

In contrast to the election manifestos, the EU Profiler statements were coded manually. In this case, inter-coder reliability is indeed a matter of concern. Due to limited resources and time, the coding of EU Profiler statements was done by one coder only. This means that it does not meet the requirements of inter-coder reliability (see

above). The following example shows, why this might become a problem: Some statements might address more than one issue. In such cases, the coder has to decide what issue to base the assignment on, because each statement was assigned to one issue category only. Put the case that the coder assigns the statement to the wrong issue category; this might distort the salience results for EU Profiler statements. Since there is no other coder, it cannot be tested whether *coder A* assigned a statement to the same issue category as *coder B* (and coder C, D, E, etc.). In other words, the reliability (or correctness) of the coder's assignment cannot be measured against the assignment of another coder. This is a major limitation of the present thesis.

Van Camp et al. (2012, p. 9) tackled the issue of inter-coder reliability by having two persons code a small percentage of the VAA statements. Their Krippendorff's alpha[24] accounted for 0.8, which is the lower acceptable limit for good reliability (Gemenis, 2012b, p. 10). Due to limited resources and time, their method of measuring inter-coder reliability was not applicable to the present thesis.

Although the thesis at hand does not fulfil the requirements of inter-coder reliability, it meets the weakest standard of coding reliability (i.e. stability), because the EU Profiler statements were coded more than once.

6.2. Measurement validity

6.2.1. Dictionary approach

Computer-assisted content analysis was applied to election manifestos. More precisely, a self-made dictionary was applied to the election manifestos and matching words were counted. On the one hand, this is a suitable method for documents containing a large amount of words, because it is less time-consuming than hand coding. Moreover, words are the safest recording unit for written documents as far as reliability is concerned; at the same time they are easily recognizable for computers (Krippendorff 2004, p. 104). Aside from that, provided that the dictionary is available, the analysis can be replicated with low effort. On the other hand, "the burden rests on the researcher to establish complete and carefully researched dictionaries" (Neuendorf, 2002, p. 9).

[24] Krippendorff's alpha is generally agreed to be an appropriate measure of reliability in content analysis (Gemenis, 2012b, p. 10).

Although, words for the dictionary were researched and selected as carefully and accurately as possible, measurement validity of the dictionary cannot be guaranteed. One reason for this is ambiguity of words: A word can have different meanings depending on the context (Rooduijn & Pauwels, 2011, p. 1275). For example, the word "race" may refer to people's ethnic origin or to a competition (e.g. race among runners). The term "work" may refer to another subject area than employment if used as a verb in the sense of "working on e.g. a legislative proposal". As a consequence, not every word that could possibly refer to a certain issue category can be included in the dictionary.

In addition, words that are not ambiguous might become ambiguous, as soon as they are complemented by an asterisk. For example, the term 'car*' may refer to 'car' or 'cars', but also to 'care' in the sense of health or welfare protection. Hence, not every word with an asterisk that could refer to a certain issue category necessarily refers to it. As a consequence, not every word that could possibly refer to a certain issue category can be complemented with an asterisk.

Another limitation that comes with the dictionary approach concerns the number of words in a given issue category. A given dictionary's issue category may in itself suggest salience, because the number of word matches of an issue category partly depends on the number of words a given category contains. In other words, the more dictionary words a given issue category contains, the greater the probability that this category accounts for a high amount of word matches.

As for the present thesis, both, classical as well as computer-assisted analyses are based on the idea that repetition of words or sentences indicates salience of issues. However, there are issues in which the positional content matters more than the number of times an issue is mentioned (Gemenis, 2012b, p. 5). For example, the sentence "If we win the next election, cars will be prohibited" does not have to be repeated in order to attract attention. Such sentences are not taken into account neither by classical nor by computer-assisted content analysis.

6.2.2. Most important problem question

In order to measure salience across European citizens, the present thesis draws on the so-called 'most important problem' (MIP) questions of the 2009 EES Voter Study. According to Wlezien (2005, p. 556), such questions confuse two different characteristics of salience, namely the importance of issues and the extent to which an issue is a problem. For example, environment might be a permanently important issue to voters, but it is a problem only if, for example, air pollution affects public health. Responses to MIP questions usually tell us about the perceived importance of a problem, but not about the importance of an issue (see section 2.1. for the difference between a problem and an issue). In other words, MIP responses contain little information about the respondents' issue salience. The fact that the present thesis draws on the MIP questions of the Voter Study can therefore be regarded as a limitation.

6.3. Document selection

Using election manifestos compiled by the Euromanifestos project might be a limitation, because the Euromanifestos project examines election manifestos of 'relevant' parties only, leaving the other parties out of consideration (see section 3.1.). The results of this thesis would be more representative, if the election manifestos of all parties in the EU Profiler had been examined.

6.4. Database

It might be argued that it is more reliable to use the CMP database than using the results of self-conducted content analyses. On the one hand, the CMP is indeed the most popular database for parties' policy emphases and positions, because its data covers 50 countries and all free democratic elections since 1945 (Trechsel and Mair 2009, p. 3; Gemenis 2013, p. 4). On the other hand, the CMP's coding scheme lacks inter-coder reliability, because it is too complex. Mikhaylov, Laver, & Benoit (2012, p. 85) found that it depends on the categories whether or not coders agree on assigning (quasi-) sentences to the categories. Hence, there are considerable differences in reliability among different coding categories (Gemenis, 2012b, p. 19).

Another limitation of the CMP is that it analyses not only election manifestos, but also so-called 'proxy documents', that is, regional manifestos, election flyers, party leader speeches, programme summaries in newspapers and handwritten documents

(Gemenis, 2012a). According to Gemenis (2012, p. 596), including such proxy documents was done out of necessity, rather than the strategic thought that different types of documents are equally comparable to election manifestos. In fact, using different types of documents might lead to invalid salience estimates, because proxy documents such as party leader speeches are not as representative as election manifestos. In view of these limitations, it was decided not to use the CMP data for the present thesis.

6.5. Case selection

Case selection might limit the present thesis' findings in as much as only six out of 30 possible territories were examined. This is due to the limited time and scope of the thesis. Moreover, analysing election manifestos of 30 different territories requires knowledge of the languages of all these territories and availability of all election manifestos.

7. Critical remarks on the EU Profiler

As a transnational VAA issued to pan-European elections, the EU Profiler faces two major challenges: Firstly, it aims to include different issues out of 30 territories in 28 general statements. Since issue salience differs significantly from territory to territory, it is questionable whether the 28 general EU Profiler statements contain a representative picture of all issues of the 30 territories and whether two specific statements per territory suffice to provide a representative picture of the country-specific issues.

Secondly, there is no unified European electoral system. Each Member State holds its own elections to the EP. As a consequence, election manifestos for the EP elections are formulated by national parties instead of European parties. This shows that the unification process of the European electoral system is still at an early stage, provided that there is such a process at all. As long as there is no strong desire for further European integration among European citizens, EP elections will continue to be hold on national level. As a consequence, election manifestos and European citizens will be concerned with national issues rather than European issues. And most public debates will take place on national rather than on European level. Having in mind that the EU Profiler focuses on European issues, it is questionable whether it pro-

vides voting advice that is helpful to its users; they will most likely be concerned with national issues as long as there is no further identification with the EU. In this regard, the EU Profiler's challenge is to raise awareness for European issues, foster identification with the EU and promote a pan-European electoral system.

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Appendix

Appendix 1:

Table 2: Number of analysed election manifestos in comparison to the number of political parties included in the EU Profiler

	Number of analysed election manifestos	Number of political parties included in EU Profiler
Austria	6	16
Germany	7	11
Ireland	6	7
UK (England, Scotland, Wales)	8	17

Appendix 2: Excel file 'Data'

- First sheet ('Manifestos&Statements'): Shares per category, total number of word scores, HHI values, p-values

- Second sheet ('Statements'): Assignment of EU Profiler statements to issue categories

Appendix 3: Content Dictionary in German and English

- see Excel file 'Content Dictionary'.

Appendix 4:

Table 3: Issue concentration in EU Profiler, the Voter Study and election manifestos

Territory	Unit	HHI	Party family
Austria	EU Profiler	0.12	
Austria	Voter Study	0.14	
Austria	FPÖ	0.25	ExRight
Austria	GRÜNEN	0.19	Green
Austria	HPM/ MARTIN	0.41	SocDem
Austria	LF	0.19	Lib
Austria	ÖVP	0.22	ChristDem
Austria	SPÖ	0.16	SocDem
Germany	EU Profiler	0.12	
Germany	Voter Study	0.18	
Germany	B90GRÜNEN	0.15	Green
Germany	CDU	0.27	ChristDem
Germany	CSU	0.29	ChristDem
Germany	LINKE	0.16	RadLeft
Germany	FDP	0.22	Lib
Germany	REP	0.35	ExRight
Germany	SPD	0.21	SocDem
Ireland	EU Profiler	0.13	
Ireland	Voter Study	0.17	
Ireland	FF	0.18	Con
Ireland	FG	0.15	ChristDem
Ireland	GREENS	0.19	Green
Ireland	LAB	0.17	SocDem

Ireland	SF	0.18	RadLeft
Ireland	SP	0.23	RadLeft
England	EU Profiler	0.12	
England	Voter Study	0.14	
England	BNP	0.15	ExRight
England	CON	0.19	Con
England	GREENS	0.13	Green
England	LAB	0.18	SocDem
England	LD	0.18	Lib
England	UKIP	0.19	Eurosceptic
Scotland	EU Profiler	0.12	
Scotland	Voter Study	0.14	
Scotland	SNP	0.17	Regionalist
Scotland	BNP	0.15	ExRight
Scotland	CON	0.19	Con
Scotland	LAB	0.18	SocDem
Scotland	LD	0.18	Lib
Scotland	UKIP	0.19	Eurosceptic
Wales	EU Profiler	0.12	
Wales	Voter Study	0.15	
Wales	PC	0.15	Regionalist
Wales	BNP	0.15	ExRight
Wales	CON	0.19	Con
Wales	GREENS	0.13	Green
Wales	LAB	0.18	SocDem
Wales	LD	0.18	Lib
Wales	UKIP	0.19	Eurosceptic
*The parties that are marked blue are the same parties as represented in England.			

Appendix 5:

Table 4: EU Profiler distribution compared to distribution in the Voter Study and election manifestos

	EU Profiler Distribution compared to:	
Territory	**Unit**	**p-value**
Austria	Voter Study	0.31
Austria	FPÖ	0.20
Austria	GRÜNEN	0.24
Austria	HPM/ MARTIN	0.04
Austria	LF	0.36
Austria	ÖVP	0.19
Austria	SPÖ	0.11
Germany	Voter Study	0.40
Germany	B90GRÜNEN	0.21
Germany	CDU	0.22
Germany	CSU	0.10
Germany	LINKE	0.19
Germany	FDP	0.19
Germany	REP	0.14
Germany	SPD	0.22
Ireland	Voter Study	0.21
Ireland	FF	0.58
Ireland	FG	0.29
Ireland	GREENS	0.22
Ireland	LAB	0.48
Ireland	SF	0.06
Ireland	SP	0.12

England	Voter Study	0.31
England	BNP	0.07
England	CON	0.17
England	GREENS	0.38
England	LAB	0.19
England	LD	0.27
England	UKIP	0.02
Scotland	Voter Study	0.23
Scotland	SNP	0.23
Scotland	BNP	0.07
Scotland	CON	0.17
Scotland	LAB	0.19
Scotland	LD	0.27
Scotland	UKIP	0.02
Wales	Voter Study	0.48
Wales	PC	0.26
Wales	BNP	0.07
Wales	CON	0.17
Wales	GREENS	0.38
Wales	LAB	0.19
Wales	LD	0.27
Wales	UKIP	0.02
*The parties that are marked blue are the same parties as represented in England.		

Appendix 6:

Table 5: Average HHI of EU Profiler/ the Voter Study in comparison to Party Families

Unit	**Party family**	**Average HHI**
EU Profiler	-	0.12
Election manifestos	Radical left/ communist	0.19
	Green	0.16
	Social democratic	0.21
	Liberal	0.19
	Agrarian	-
	Christian democratic	0.23
	Protestant	-
	Conservative	0.19
	Extreme right	0.21
	Regionalist	0.16
	Eurosceptic	0.19

Appendix 7:

Table 6: Average HHI of election manifestos per territory, of the Voter Study and of the EU Profiler

Unit/ Territory	**Average HHI**
EU Profiler	0.12
Voter Study	0.15
Austria	0.24
Germany	0.24
Ireland	0.18

England	0.17
Scotland	0.18
Wales	0.17

Appendix 8:

Table 7: Average p-value for each Party Family

Party Family	Average p-value
Radical left/ communist	0.12
Green	0.28
Social democratic	0.20
Liberal	0.27
Agrarian	-
Christian democratic	0.20
Protestant	-
Conservative	0.27
Extreme right	0.11
Regionalist	0.25
Eurosceptic	0.02

Appendix 9:

Table 8: Average p-value of election manifestos per territory and of the Voter Study

Unit/ Territory	Average p-value
Voter Study	0.32
Austria	0.19
Germany	0.18
Ireland	0.29
England	0.18
Scotland	0.16
Wales	0.19

Appendix 10: Territory specific Graphs

- See Excel file 'Data', third to eighth sheet

Appendix 11:

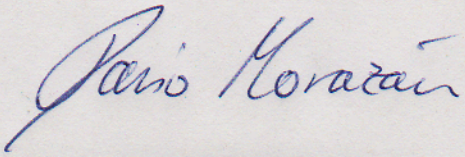
Table 9: Index of abbreviations of political party names

Abbreviation	Full Name	Territory
B90GRÜNEN	Bündnis 90/Die Grünen	Germany
BNP	British National Party	England
CDU	Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands	Germany
CON	Conservative Party	England
CSU	Christlich-Soziale Union	Germany
FDP	Freie Demokratische Partei	Germany

FF	Fianna Fáil	Ireland
FG	Fine Gael	Ireland
FPÖ	Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs	Austria
GREENS	Green Party	Ireland/ England
GRÜNEN	Die Grünen	Germany
HPM	Hans Peter Martin	Austria
LAB	Labour Party	Ireland/ England
LD	Liberal Democrats	England
LF	Liberales Forum	Austria
LINKE	Die Linke	Germany
ÖVP	Österreichische Volkspartei	Austria
PC	Plaid Cymru	Wales
REP	Die Republikaner	Germany
SF	Sinn Féin	Ireland
SNP	Scottish National Party	Scotland
SP	Socialist Party	Ireland
SPD	Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands	Germany
SPÖ	Sozialdemokratische Partei Österreichs	Austria
UKIP	UK Independence Party	England

Declaration of Academic Integrity

I hereby confirm that the present thesis "Comparing issue salience in EU Profiler statements to issue salience in election manifestos and European citizenry" is solely my own work and that if any text passages or diagrams from books, papers, the internet or other sources have been copied or in any other way used, all references – including those found in electronic media – have been acknowledged and fully cited.



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